

March 1, 2021

Hon. Representative Marvin Abney  
Chairman  
House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**Re: Pending Legislation: 13 SUB A, as amended; House Bill No 5193**

Dear Chairman Abney:

Greetings from Providence Preparatory Charter School ("PVD Prep"). We are a community-based, non-profit charter middle school that is scheduled to open in Providence's West End neighborhood in six short months (the fall of 2021).

PVD Prep received preliminary approval to operate a charter middle school from the Rhode Island Board of Education in December of last year. Our school's mission is to prepare a diverse group of Providence middle school students for success in college preparatory high schools. Our school has been authorized to provide a lottery weight to students who are enrolling in our school from low-performing elementary and middle schools. Next year we will open with fifth and sixth grade and we plan to grow by one grade level in each of the two following school years. You can learn more about our school by visiting our website at [www.pvdprep.org](http://www.pvdprep.org).

Since our initial authorization approval in December, we have: (1) executed a long-term lease for a school facility located at 155 Harrison Street in Providence near the Cranston Street Armory; (2) successfully applied for and received a competitive \$800,000 federal grant to support school opening activities, (3) hired staff, including a full-time qualified school administrator, and; (4) conducted significant community outreach to prospective families throughout Providence.

Our school has already received more applications for enrollment from Providence families than we have capacity to serve next year. We expect that the demand for seats at our school will continue to grow between now and our lottery on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

We believe our school is unique in several important ways.

- First, our school is **specifically designed to meet the needs of our community**. Families with middle school aged students in Providence are looking for high-quality public-school options. Indeed, the Johns Hopkins report specifically cited the need for high quality middle school options in the City of Providence. We have proposed to bring a new public-school opportunity that is narrowly targeted to this area of need.
- Second, our school is **intentionally small**. We will open next September with only 126 fifth and sixth graders. Our goal is to develop an excellent middle school proof-point that can partner closely with the Providence Public School District to share strategies for middle school success.
- Finally, our school is **grounded in the community**. Our proposal earned letters of support from local organizations like Rhode Island Kids Count, Children's Friend, Family Service of Rhode Island and the College Crusade of Rhode Island. Our volunteer Board of Directors consists of Providence

residents, educators and leaders at local nonprofit organizations. Our Founding Head of School is a Providence resident, parent, homeowner and educator. Providence is our home town and we are committed to the success of all of its children.

We are reaching out to you because we are concerned about House Bill 5193. This bill, as written, would revoke the Rhode Island Board of Education's vote of authorization and prevent us from opening our doors this September. We ask that the Committee not pass this bill in its current form but instead, at a minimum, allow those schools that are already on track to open this fall to continue to proceed towards September and fulfill their commitments to families, staff members and other key partners.

Prior to hearing this bill in Committee, we would welcome an opportunity to connect with you directly to tell you more about our school. If you would be comfortable doing so, we would welcome the opportunity to tour you through our building and to meet with our staff, Board members and prospective families. If you feel that a virtual meeting or phone call would be more prudent, we welcome the opportunity to connect that way as well.

We look forward to connecting soon. In the meantime, we extend our gratitude for your consideration of our request.

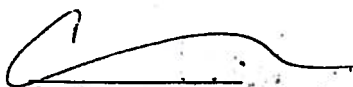
Sincerely,

Victoria Criado

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Co-Chair,  
*Providence Preparatory Charter School Board of Directors*

Chace Baptista

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Co-Chair,  
*Providence Preparatory Charter School Board of Directors*

Toby Shepherd

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Founding Head of School  
*Providence Preparatory Charter School*

CC: Hon. Members of the House Finance Committee  
Hon. Representative Corvese  
Hon. Representative Ajello  
Hon. Representative Biah  
Hon. Representative Kislak